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LETTER DATED 15 MARCH 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CROATIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

In accordance with paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 1222 (1999), I should like to inform you of the status of negotiations between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia concerning the issue of Prevlaka.

The delegations of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have met on four separate occasions, and only once since the adoption of resolution 1222 (1999) - on 9 March 1999 in Belgrade. Aside from establishing the rules of procedure and exchanging position papers, no substantive progress has so far been made in the negotiations.

It is with profound disappointment that I have to report that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has demonstrated once again, and in clear terms, that it continues to harbour territorial claims against the Republic of Croatia.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, Mate Granić, sent a letter today to the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Živadin Jovanović, informing him of the disappointment of my Government and requesting an urgent meeting in order to streamline and accelerate the negotiations.

As you are aware, the position of my Government is that the issue of Prevlaka can permanently be resolved via demilitarization of the entire Prevlaka range and, thereby, by addressing the legitimate security concerns that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia may have in this regard, as previously stated in my letter to the President of the Security Council on 7 January 1999 (S/1999/19 and Corr.1). At the same time, Croatia will continue to insist upon full respect for its internationally recognized borders.

The situation along the southernmost border between the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia remains stable. I should like to remind you that the two border-crossing points at Debeli Brijeg and Konfin have been opened permanently, in agreement with Montenegro, and are operational (S/1999/42). This contributes to further confidence-building among the local population on both sides of the border and reflects positively on stability in the wider region.

In view of the upcoming tourist season, tourism being the major economic staple in the area, it is essential to allow free movement of civilians throughout the entire territory on both sides of the international border and over the border crossing points, and thus take another important step towards full normalization of relations. My Government would welcome it if your forthcoming report to the Security Council took into account this important step towards economic revitalization in the area.

I should like to request your kind assistance in distributing the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ivan ŠIMONOVIĆ
Ambassador
Permanent Representative